



LITERACY AND GENDER GAP : STATUS AND CHALLENGES

Dr. Manmeet Oberoi

Professor cum Principal, Shah Satnam ji College of Education.

ABSTRACT

Literacy is one of the important indicators of socio-economic and cultural development which can analyze the female progression and women's status and autonomy in society. India has effective literacy rate of 74.04%. It is to be noted that 82.14% males and 65.46% females are literate which shows a large gender gap in literacy in 2011 census. It has been estimated that at the current rate of progress, India will attain universal literacy only until 2060. Among the Indian states, Kerala and then Mizoram have the highest literacy rate. Among the Union Territories, Lakshadweep has the highest literacy rate. Lowest male literacy rate is in Bihar while Rajasthan has lowest female literacy rate. The male and female literacy rate is compared in Punjab and it is observed that Punjabi female literacy is comparatively better as compared to national figures as well as from a number of states but despite tall claims of women empowerment not a single district of Punjab has higher female literacy rate than males.

KEY WORDS: Literacy, Women empowerment, Socio-economic development.

Introduction

Literacy and education are important indicators in a society and play a central role in human development that impacts overall social-economic development milieu. Higher levels of literacy and education lead to better attainment of health and nutritional status, economic growth, population control, empowerment of the weaker sections and community as a whole. Also, higher literacy rates improve development indicators consistently. According to the census of India, a person who can read and write with understanding in any language aged above six year is considered as literate (Som & Mishra, 2014). A person, who can only read but cannot write, is not considered as 'literate'. It is not necessary that a person should receive any formal education or pass any minimum education standard.

Female Literacy in India

The development of any nation or region is indicated by the level of education and that too of both genders. That is why 'education for all' is strongly recommended and focused on by our government.

In India, the active role of women folk in society is evident from the fact that social and economic conditions have compelled the women folk as a productive member in organized or unorganized sector outside the home. The participation in the economically productive work particularly outside the four walls of the house has made them more self dependent assertive and playing an active role in decision making, both at home and at work place. Education has brought them from the subordinate and sub judged position to an equal level with men.

The investments in Female education are of particular interest and importance to development for three primary reasons first available estimates suggest that the rates of return on investment in female education (in terms of economic productivity) are at least as high as the rates on investments in male education. Secondly it is widely conjectured that there are important positive effects of women education on non market factors related to human resource development. i.e. health nutrition and children's education and population growth i.e. reduction in fertility and infant and child mortality.

Lastly there is the issue of equity. In most societies women appear to have less control over sources and over their destinies than do men. Increasing female access to education is one widely advocated means of remaining or reducing these inequalities.

India has made a considerable progress in this sector and with all the efforts the lit-

eracy rate grew to 74.04% in 2011 from meager 12% in 1947. But still, India has not achieved what it should have during this period.

First of all, the progress made in this sector is very slow. Secondly, there a considerable gap between male and female literacy rates in India. It has been estimated that at the current rate of progress, India will attain universal literacy only until 2060. As per the census of 2011, an effective literacy rate for men was 82.14% whereas for women it was 65.46%. Though there has been seen a substantial increase in the number of literate women and this gap is narrowing, it still persists. Still, in India the educational access to women folk is still problematic area.

Factors For Low Female Literacy Rate

Factors responsible for poor female literacy rate: There are many factors responsible for poor female literacy rate in India like.

- Gender based inequality
- Social discrimination and economic population
- Occupation of girl child in domestic child in domestic charges
- Low enrolment of girls in schools - Low retention rate and high dropout rate.

Status of Literacy Rate according to census 2011

According to last census held be 2011, in India 77, 84, 54, 120 persons have been counted as literates. Among all literates, 33, 42, 50, 358 are females, whereas 44, 42, 03, 762 are males. The literacy rate of India in 2011 is 74.0 per cent. Literacy rate among females is 65.5 per cent whereas the literacy rate among males is 82.1 per cent. The overall literacy into in country has increased from 43.6% in 1981 to 74.0% as per 2011 census, the female literacy rate has also increased from 29.8% in 1981 to 65.5% in 2011. It is noticed that the female literacy rate during the period 2001-2011 increased by 11.8% whereas male literacy rate rose by 6.8%. Hence the female literacy rate actually increased by 5% more compared to male literacy.

Among the Indian states, Kerala has the highest literacy rate 93.91% and then Mizoram 91.58%. Among the Union Territories, Lakshadweep has the highest literacy rate of 92.28%. Bihar has the lowest literacy rate in India with 63.82%. The Male literacy is highest in Lakshadweep 96.0% and Kerala 96.1%. The Female literacy is highest in Kerala 91.98% and Mizoram 89.40%. Lowest male literacy rate is in Bihar 73.39%.

Lowest female literacy is in Rajasthan 52.66%.

Here is the table of Male and female literacy rate:

Table No. 1 : Male and Female Literacy Rate in India

Rank	Persons		Males		Females	
	Name of State/UT	Literacy Rate	Name of State/UT	Literacy Rate	Name of State/UT	Literacy Rate
Five Top States / UTs						
	INDIA	74	INDIA	82.1	INDIA	65.5
1	Kerala	93.9	Lakshadweep	96.1	Kerala	92.0
2	Lakshadweep	92.3	Kerala	96.0	Mizoram	89.4
3	Mizoram	91.6	Mizoram	93.7	Lakshadweep	88.2
4	Tripura	87.8	Goa	92.8	Tripura	83.1
5	Goa	87.4	Tripura	92.2	A & N Islands	81.8

Bottom Five State(s) / UT's						
	INDIA	74.0	INDIA	82.1	INDIA	65.5
1	Bihar	63.8	Bihar	73.4	Rajasthan	52.7
2	Arunachal Pradesh	67.0	Arunachal Pradesh	73.7	Bihar	53.3
3	Rajasthan	67.1	Andhra Pradesh	75.6	Jharkhand	56.2
4	Jharkhand	67.6	Meghalaya	77.2	Jammu & Kashmir	58.0
5	Andhra Pradesh	67.7	Jammu & Kashmir	78.3	Uttar Pradesh	59.3

Female Literacy Rate in Punjab

- If we see the state wise literacy rate in our country Punjab has a literacy rate of 75.8% and it is at 21st position.
- In case of male literacy Punjab is at 25th position with male literacy rate at 80.4%
- But if we talk about female literacy Punjab is at 17th position with female literacy rate at 70.7%. So, it is clear that in Punjabi female literacy is comparatively better as compared to national figures as well as from a number of states.
- Despite tall claims of women empowerment not a single district of Punjab has higher female literacy rate than males. In all districts of Punjab females are less educated than males. It all has been happening despite huge hike of total education plan of state.
- As per figures of Sarb Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), total literacy rate of Punjab is 75.8% with female literacy rate 70.7% and male literacy rate 80.4%. Details show that Hoshiarpur has highest literacy rate of 88.8% in males and 80.3% in females, while Roopnagar is at second place with 87.5% in males and Ludhiana with 77.9% in females.
- The literacy rate of big cities like of Jalandhar, Amritsar, Ludhiana and Patiala, which is between (80.1 to 86.1% males and 69.8% to 78.5% in females) show that people have started taking care of education. But the lowest literacy rate 67.3% (male) and 55.7% (female) of Mansa district also points that people of this district are not serious about education. (Times of India, Nov.7,2011).

female literacy rates were 75.6% and 63.55% respectively in 2001.

- Inter-District Analysis reveals that female literacy is highest in Hoshiarpur district (80.3%) which is comparable to Delhi (80.8%) whereas lowest literacy rate was in Mansa district (55.7%) which was comparable to Jharkhand (55.4%).
- Gap in literacy rate of male & female in Punjab has also decreased over the years. During 2001 and 2011, the literacy gap came down from 11.9% to 9.7% respectively.
- In state of Punjab district wise literacy rate (%age) male literacy female literacy and gap in literacy against -woman folk is compared. It is seen that in Jalandhar this gap is minimum (7.6%) and in Ferozpur this gap is maximum (13.7%). But this gap is much lower than the gap seen in national literacy rate.
- Some districts of Punjab have lesser gap between the male and female literacy than the overall literacy rate gap in Punjab state (9.7%) between male and female literacy rate. These districts are Jalandhar, Moga, Barnala, Ludhiana, Amritsar, Hoshiarpur, Fatehgarh Sahib, Kapurthala, SAS Nagar but in Ferozpur this gap is maximum.
- Two districts have gap between male and female literacy above 12%. These districts are Muktsar and Ferozpur.

This data indicates that a vigorous campaign needs to be launched with greater focus on female literacy because women account for an overwhelming percentage of the total number of illiterates.

Suggestions:

Following suggestions can be made to remove constraints in literacy campaign for women :-

- There is need that the educated persons in the villages should be encouraged to motivate the male and elders of the family to send the female members to continuing education programme..
- During literacy campaign social awareness among women should be increased regarding the importance of education for themselves as well as for their children.
- The women learners should be encouraged to educate their children especially girls by enrolling them in formal schools.

Conclusion

But in spite of all reasons, women must understand and realize that education can actually end the vicious cycle of poverty, their misfortune, so that they can live a life with pride. In case of any misfortune in life, it is education that would help her, not anything else. The government should really work towards the number, distance and quality of schools in rural as well as urban India. We should encourage the girl child in getting education to create a balanced and an educated society.

REFERENCES

- Gender Statistics of Punjab 2012, online <http://www.pbplanning.gov.in/pdf/Gender%20Statistics%20%202012%20final.pdf>
- Som, K.S. & Mishra, R.P. (2014). Literacy and their differentials in West Bengal, International Journal of Science and Research, 3(6), 1537-1545.
- Statistical database For literacy Provisional population and literacy 2001 Vol I (pp-48) Indian Adult Education Association.
- <http://indiafacts.in/india-census-2011/literacy-rate-india-2011/>
- Times of India, Nov.7,2011

Table No.2 : Literacy Rate in Punjab

S.N.	District	Literacy rate					
		Male		Female		Total	
		2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
1	Gurdaspur	79.8	84.6	67.1	74.8	73.8	79.9
2	Amritsar	75.1	80.1	65.2	72.0	70.4	76.3
3	Tarantaran	66.7	73.2	52.3	61.9	59.9	67.8
4	Kapurthala	79.0	83.2	68.3	74.6	73.9	79.1
5	Jalandhar	82.5	86.1	73.1	78.5	78.0	82.5
6	SBS nagar	82.9	85.4	69.5	73.9	76.4	79.8
7	Hoshiarpur	86.5	88.8	75.3	80.3	81.0	84.6
8	RoopNagar	82.7	87.5	68.7	76.4	76.1	82.2
9	SAS Nagar	83.8	87.9	72.1	79.2	78.4	83.8
10	Ludhiana	80.3	86.0	71.9	77.9	76.5	82.2
11	Ferozpur	68.7	75.4	51.7	61.7	60.7	68.9
12	Faridkot	68.1	74.6	55.0	63.9	62.0	69.6
13	Sri Muktsar Sahib	65.4	71.8	50.3	59.2	58.2	65.8
14	Moga	68.0	74.4	58.5	66.5	63.5	70.7
15	Bathinda	67.8	73.8	53.7	61.9	61.2	68.3
16	Mansa	58.9	67.3	45.2	55.7	52.4	61.8
17	Sangrur	66.0	73.2	53.0	62.2	59.9	68.0
18	Barnala	65.4	71.6	54.5	63.6	60.3	67.8
19	Patiala	75.4	80.2	62.6	69.8	69.3	75.3
20	Fatehgarh Sahib	78.3	83.3	68.3	74.8	73.6	79.4
	Punjab	75.2	80.4	63.4	70.7	69.7	75.8

Source: Statistical Abstract of Punjab

So, it is clear that in Punjabi female literacy is comparatively better as compared to national figures as well as from a number of states.

- As per 2011 Population census, the literacy rate in Punjab is 75.8% which is higher than the literacy rate of 69.65% in 2001. In 2011, only 70.7% of females in Punjab were literate compared to 80.4% of men. The male and